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This historical study traces amounts and types of influence exerted over colleges in Pennsylvania through contributions of private donors. Cites specific examples in Lafayette College, Washington and Jefferson College, Haverford College, University of Pennsylvania, Bryn Mawr College, Western University of Pennsylvania, Bucknell University, and Grove City College.

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Private Beneficence and Control of Higher Education in Pennsylvania

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HISTORICALLY, donations of considerable sums of money have been made by trustees and other individuals and groups to colleges and universities in Pennsylvania without specific stipulation as to their use. In many instances, even those gifts offered for special purposes served to augment the implementation of pre-existing policy, to endow an extant chair or to establish a scholarship.[1] There was, however, giving of a different kind. Individuals and groups frequently predicated compliance with specific conditions or purposes prior to the receipt of their intended benefactions. And these often resulted in an altered course and an assumption of an ideological or curricular orientation different from the existing one.

Lafayette College experienced a number of such changes. The catalogue of 1852-53 graphically describes the institution's complete transformation into a synodical college:

> During the recent sessions of the Synod in Baltimore, that body felt that it had not the control of the college as fully as it was desirable. It therefore recommended the subscribers to the endowment fund, to suspend the payment of their subscriptions until the Board should be brought fully under the control of the Synod, by the resignation of those Trustees who had not been nominated by the Synod, and appointment of others in their place, who had been so nominated. Accordingly, at a meeting of the Board, held immediately after the rising of the Synod, fourteen members resigned, and their places were filled by nominations of the Synod. Thus an entire change was effected in the Board, and in all the officers of it, by which the Synod has the entire control of the Institution.[2]

In 1866, the curriculum of the college was given new direction by the trustees' acceptance of "the munificent sum of $100,000 from A. Pardee of Hazelton, Pa., to found a scientific course in the College."[3] Six years later (1872), the board considered a communication "from Mr. Benjamin Douglass—proposing a course of Classical Study to be composed exclusively of the Greek & Latin writings of Christian Authors—and offering to contribute to the college funds $100,000—if such course should be allowed to supercede the one now in use." A committee was appointed "to confer with Mr. Douglass—in reference to a modification of his offer,—proposing to him—that the Board establish a parallel course of Christian Authors, elective with the old course."[4] Although such a course was established, Mr. Douglass' failure, in 1877, to continue to meet the payments which he had promised, caused the trustees to resolve "That the Douglass Course in Christian Greek and Latin, established by the Board as a Department and designed to run parallel with the Classical Course, throughout the entire curriculum be abolished."[5]

The curricula of other institutions were influenced similarly by the contributions of private donors. Washington and Jefferson College agreed (1871) to institute a separate scientific course, for which "a diploma of the highest grade will be given," as a result of "the munificent donation of Twenty-Thousand Dollars . . . tendered by Dr. F. J. Lemoyne."[6] In 1881, the University of Pennsylvania established the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce because of a gift of $100,000 from Joseph Wharton.[7] Haverford College, assured that it was not the intention of the donors to create a theological department, agreed to provide "for the regular study of the Bible . . . and Religious Teaching" on the basis of two separate contributions of $63,000 in 1900 and $50,000 in 1907.[8] A graduate school of education (1911) and a graduate school of social work (1915) were established by Bryn Mawr College as a result of bequests specifically designated for those purposes.[9]

As indicated in the case of Lafayette College, the orientation of an institution or its control could be changed or modified by the acceptance of contributions which are conditionally given. The success of the movement to amalgamate Washington and Jefferson colleges no doubt was due, in part, to the pledge of the Rev. C. C. Beatty of $50,000 to the new, single institution which

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[1] *Cf.*, Dickinson College: Letter, Benjamin Rush to John Montgomery, Feb. 17, 1784; Allegheny College: Minutes of Trustees, May 26, 1817, I, 4; Haverford College: Minutes of Managers, Dec. 24, 1840, II, n.p.; Lincoln University: Minutes of Trustees, Nov. 27, 1866, I, 55-56; Bryn Mawr College: Minutes of Trustees, Jan. 11, 1906, IV, 231.

[2] *Catalogue*, 1852-53, pp. 21-22.

[3] Minutes of Trustees, March 28, 1866, II, 163 *ff.*

[4] *Ibid.*, July 2, 1872, II, 263.

[5] *Ibid.*, Jan. 31, 1877, II, 344; June 26, 1877, II, 348; Nov. 7, 1877, II, 359.

[6] Minutes of Trustees, June 26, 1871, pp. 174-5.

[7] Minutes of Trustees, March 1, 1881, XI, 570-1; March 24, 1881, XI, 576 *ff.*

[8] Minutes of Managers, 10 mo. 26, 1900, VI, 18 *ff.*; 11 mo. 15, 1907, VI, 345-6.

[9] Minutes of Directors, 1 mo. 20, 1911, I, 384-6; *Catalogue*, 1913, 152 *ff.*; 1915, 104 *ff.*

[10] Minutes of Trustees, April 12, 1865, pp. 13-14.

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would emerge from their unification.[10] In 1875, the trustees of the Western University of Pennsylvania reluctantly agreed to receive the pledge of $25,000 from the estate of Charles Avery "for the education and elevation of colored people of the United States and Canada, in strict conformity to the provisions of the last will and Testament of said decedent and at all times to give gratuitous instructions in the Collegiate and Scientific Departments to not less than twelve colored pupils, if so many duly qualified according to the rules for admission to this University shall apply . . . " At the same time, they made it clear that they would accept the gift "provided that no conditions more onerous to the University than those now connected with the proposed donation, be attached thereto."[11] An offer of $50,000 from William Bucknell to the University at Lewisburg (1881), contingent, among other conditions, upon the placing of the university property "in the hands of a single Board of twenty members, chosen by the new subscribers, of whom fifteen shall constitute a quorum, and that this be the only Board of control," resulted in a revised fiscal policy and a change of the institution's name to Bucknell University.[12]

A clear example of the influence of large contributors in the determination of institutional policy may be observed in the experience of Grove City College. In donating 4,000 shares of Sun Oil Co. common stock (1935) to the college, the Pew family stipulated that "They would like to have the Board so arrange the acceptance of this gift that the government, either state or national, can never take over the college except by condemnation proceedings. . . . That, if the college or building is ever taken over by such proceedings, the then board of trustees will use the proceeds for some good cause for the benefit of the public."[13] Later, under the leadership of J. Howard Pew, who "impressed the value of keeping aloof from Government control and aid of any kind from the Government," the trustees resolved "that we accept no subsidy from any Government, National, State or Local."[14]

Higher education has not been free of the control or influence which accompanies private pecuniary aid. At the same time, the evidence indicates that the policies and internal life of the colleges and universities of the commonwealth have been remarkably immune from the regulatory influences which are presumed to accompany state appropriations.[15] The question, then, which confronts the colleges and universities is not whether state or private contributions will result in some measure of control of education, but whether they should shun an important source of financial support on the basis of the specious argument that more onerous regulation inevitably follows government beneficence.

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[11] Minutes of Trustees, Nov. 29, 1875, p. 103.

[12] Minutes of Trustees, April 21, 1881, II, 479-80; June 22, 1886, III, 82-3.

[13] Minutes of Trustees, October 25, 1935, p. 211.

[14] *Ibid.*, December 10, 1935, p. 213.

[15] For a detailed historical study citing Pennsylvania's experience, see S. Sack, *Pennsylvania History*, 26: 240-249, July, 1959.